

Marketing 101

Photography basics

Technology has come a long way in photography. Lightweight, 35 mm automatic camera have taken much of the guess work out of photography and have made picture taking almost as easy as pointing and shooting. Despite advances in technology, the most important piece of equipment can't be purchased. The piece of equipment is in your mind. Anyone can *take* picture, but it takes considerable more thought and skill to *make* a picture. The keys to any good photos are composition and lighting.

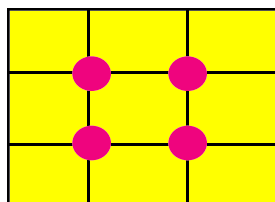
Composition is key

Composition is merely the arrangement of elements in a photo to create a well balanced and interesting picture. Effective composition can enhance the photo and message you intend to send, and is critical for high quality photos.

Good composition means the pictorial elements have been organized and presented in such a way that the photographer's main idea is effectively communicated to the viewer. To achieve good composition, you must have clearly in mind what message, idea, feeling, or mood you want your photo to convey. This usually means the photo will be about something, and an object or group of objects will stand out as the reason for the picture. One feature will usually appear especially important, significant, or interesting. Such a feature or element is called the photo's center of interest.

Rule of thirds

One composition technique to emphasis the center of interest is the rule of thirds. Mentally divide your picture area into thirds, both vertically and horizontally, as sort of an exaggerated tic-tac-toe grid. Use these lines as reference for placement of horizons or other main features. Any of the four points at which the imaginary lines intersect has been found to be a natural spot for emphasizing the dominant subject.



Placing elements at these spaces can add tension and drama to your photos. Likewise, when positioning the horizon in your finder, you'll want to avoid placing it directly in the center, dividing the frame in half. By placing the horizon line in the upper or lower third of the frame, you can create additional compositional interest. Also remember to keep the horizon line square. A tilted horizon will quickly wreck a photo.

Movement into frame

The direction in which a subject faces or moves creates a space expectation for the viewer whose eye is drawn toward the movement. You should provide space within the frame for your subject to look into or move into. If you don't provide space for the movement, the viewer's eye tends to move out of the frame. For example, a jumping dog needs to have a place inside the picture to land, or it will appear to be jumping out of the picture. A good general guideline to remember, is that if there is action in a picture it should lead into the picture, not out of the picture.

Camera angle

The angle at which you shoot a picture affects the message you communicate. When a picture is shot from a normal eye position with the camera parallel to the ground, it is called an *eye level shot*. Eye levels shots appear most natural because they reflect how we view the world.

A picture taken from a position lower than your subject is called a *low angle shot*. Low angle shots emphasize height. Conversely, a *high angle shot* is taken from a position higher than your subject, and tends to emphasize the smallness of objects.

Leading lines

Another compositional technique is leading lines. There are lines and shapes all around us. As photographers, we can use them to lead our viewer's eyes into certain areas of a photo. As the lines converge on a point, the viewers' eyes will follow that point. By placing the subject on or near that conversion point, you'll be leading your viewers to the subject. Those lines can also add drama and interest to photos. Before you shoot, take a moment to notice the lines in the scene you are about to photograph. Then try to incorporate them into your photos. By becoming visually aware, you'll be able to strengthen your photos with lines.

Framing

Framing is an additional technique that will help your photos sparkle. By framing the scene with some foreground material you'll add depth, dimensions, and perspective to scenes. For example, you could use part of a tree to frame one side of your main subject. There are many other items that serve as an interesting frame—just experiment.

Horizontal vs. vertical

Since human eyes are horizontally positioned, so is the orientation of our vision, even when we look at tall buildings and trees. Horizontal compositions, therefore, are literally easier on the eyes than vertical views. It's natural, then, that the 35mm (135) film format features an image size measuring 36mm from left to right and 24mm from top to bottom, which is consistent with the view seen through a camera view finder. Horizontal composition emphasizes panoramic expanse.

Vertical composition can also create some interesting photos. Vertical composition emphasizes height, and can more effectively capture tall sites such as waterfalls and skyscrapers. An idea to try in vertical composition is to fill the foreground with the face or figure of a person standing in front of a site.

Lighting Techniques

Composition and lighting are the keys to good photographs. There are several different lighting techniques.

Diffused Lighting

The perfect diffused light can be found on a foggy or overcast day. The light is soft, leaves no shadows, and gives additional color saturation.

Cross lighting

The second major type of lighting is cross lighting, or side lighting, which occurs when the light source is at a 75-90 degree angle to the subject. Lighting from the side creates, which naturally occurs during the morning hours just after sunrise and in the evening just before sunset, creates strong shadows.

Backlighting

The final type of lighting is called backlighting, which occurs when the light source comes from behind, or nearly behind the subject. A silhouette is a prime example of backlighting. Backlighting provides warm tones and increased color saturation, but is tricky because you are shooting almost directly into the light source.

Finding the right film

There are two basic 35mm(135) film formats commonly used in color photography: color negative and color is usually labeled "color" and is ideal for color prints. Reversal film, called "chrome" is ideal for creating images to be used in publication printing.

The other consideration for selecting film is choosing a film speed. The higher the ISO (International Standard Organization) rating, the faster the speed. For best results, consider using 400 for color negative film and ISO 100 for color reversal film.

Keep batteries ready

- 1) Replace batteries with batteries of the same type and brand. Mixing different batteries may cause problems, including safety hazards. Batteries are available in manganese, alkaline, lithium, NiCd, NiMH, and other types. Refer to the camera manual to find out what type of replacement batteries should be used.
- 2) Avoid touching electrode contacts of batteries. If you touch them, use a handkerchief or tissue paper to wipe off oil or moisture.
- 3) Do not stock up on batteries. Batteries become depleted over time and may not provide needed power after not being used for awhile.

Focus is critical

Whether you have an automatic or manual focus camera, it's very important that you grip your camera tightly and hold very still. Hold the camera steady in one hand, and support it in the palm of your other hand with your elbow poised against your body for additional support. Standing with one foot slightly ahead of the other may help you keep your balance by distributing your body weight more evenly.

Practice makes perfect

The best way to improve your photography skills is to practice, practice, practice. Study photos in magazines and brochures, and try to determine what type of light was used and what composition techniques make those photos interesting. Then try to mimic the technique and effect. Practice using different lighting, composition, positions, and angles. Sometimes it can be surprising what works...and you won't know until you try different techniques and ideas. Soon you'll find what works best for you and gives the sort of pictures you like.

Photographic guidelines

Try to observe the following guidelines, which can help you to improve your photographic skills and the quality of your pictures.

1. Pre-visualize the image you want to obtain. Have your central idea in mind as you think about how you want the final print to appear. Questions to consider: Are the important details included in your frame? Are distracting details excluded? Are the more significant details emphasized? If you answer no to any of these questions, try changing your angle, position, or using another technique.
2. Move your camera in as close as possible to your subject. This will increase the size of the subject in relation to other objects in the picture, and also eliminate unnecessary details from the picture.
3. Whenever possible, use or create a natural background for your subject. If the background has too many unnecessary or confusing elements, try a high angle shot against the ground, or low angle shot against the sky.
4. Whenever possible, emphasize the contrast between the subject and background. If your subject is brightly lit, try to shoot it against a dark background. If your subject is dark, try to shoot it against a light background, such as the sky. With a colorful subject, try to find a background of a contrasting hue or saturation.
5. Apply the rule of thirds as a guideline or starting point for composing your photos.

Remember, these are just guidelines—there are no absolute rules in photography. If you think you can get your message across in another fashion, don't hesitate to move beyond these guidelines. Finally, practice using the guidelines and techniques discussed here and incorporating your own ideas, and watch your photos improve.

Sources:

http://www.nikon.co.jp/main/eng/photo_world/cbp/better_pict1.htm

SCS Information Brief, Instant Solutions to 10 Common Photo Errors

SCS Slide Show, The Art of Seeing

Introduction to Photography, A Self Directing Approach, Second Edition, by Marvin Rosen, 1982.

Solutions to some common photo errors

<i>Problem:</i>	Subject too far away.
<i>Solution:</i>	Move in closer to the subject.
<i>Problem:</i>	Poor lighting, too flat.
<i>Solution:</i>	Shoot photos early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Use slide lighting. Avoid 12 noon overhead sun.
<i>Problem:</i>	All photos are taken at eye level.
<i>Solution:</i>	Vary the camera angle of your shot. Sit down, kneel, lay on your stomach, climb a tree, stand on a truck, ladder, or other equipment.
<i>Problem:</i>	Camera not understood.
<i>Solution:</i>	Practice. Use your camera regularly, Read the instructions.
<i>Problem:</i>	Subject files filled with poor slides.
<i>Solution:</i>	Get a big wastebasket and use it. Don't keep bad shots that you'll never use.
<i>Problem:</i>	Subject out of focus because of camera movement.
<i>Solution:</i>	Hold very still and concentrate on a clear picture. Try using a tripod-pod.
<i>Problem:</i>	Mystery spots, dirty looking slides.
<i>Solution:</i>	Clean your lens, keep it that way.
<i>Problem:</i>	No central theme or subject.
<i>Solution:</i>	Concentrate on one central element to illustrate your subject. Every photo doesn't need a farmer, barn, field, and the practice in the same slide.
<i>Problem:</i>	Improper storage of slides.
<i>Solution:</i>	Use clear plastic file folders, not the box the slides came in to store slides. Will stay in good condition and be easily found.

